



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES**  
**Department for Public Health**  
**Food Safety Branch**

**Ernie Fletcher**  
Governor

275 East Main Street, HS1C-F  
Frankfort, KY 40621  
(502) 564-7181  
Fax: (502) 564-0398  
[www.chfs.ky.gov](http://www.chfs.ky.gov)

**Mark D. Birdwhistell**  
Secretary

**WATER EMERGENCY OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES**  
**FOR RETAIL FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS**  
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During a water supply emergency (W.S.E.), including boil water advisories/notices, chemical contamination, or pressure reduction, water may serve as a source of contamination for food, equipment, utensils and hands. Unsafe water is also a vector in the transmission of disease. Therefore, in order to provide protection to consumers and employees, water shall be obtained from sources regulated by law and shall be handled, transported and dispensed in a sanitary manner.

**NOTE: In case of chemical contamination or total loss of pressure, the establishment shall close immediately. When chemical contamination occurs, the establishment shall not reopen until samples, jointly approved by the Cabinet or local health department and the Division of Water, Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet, justify reopening.**

**WHEN A NON-CHEMICAL W.S.E. OCCURS, THE ESTABLISHMENT SHALL CEASE OPERATING AND NOT RESUME OPERATION UNTIL THE CABINET OR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT INSPECTOR ASSURES THAT SAFE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING ARE IN PLACE:**

1. **DRINKING WATER:** Use bottled water only; post “DO NOT DRINK” signs, or, disconnect fountains.
2. **ICE** must come from commercially approved facilities outside the affected area. Ice machines that are directly connected to the water systems must not be used. Shut the machine down, and leave the unit off until the water is OK again, then clean and sanitize the unit following manufacturer’s suggested guidelines. Make ice for one (1) hour and dispose of the ice.
3. **NO FOUNTAIN DISPENSED DRINKS** – canned or bottled drinks only.
4. **COFFEE AND TEA** shall be made from bottled water, or from water that is boiled for three (3) minutes before brewing or steeping.
5. **TAP WATER** shall not be used as an ingredient in food during a non-chemical W.S.E. unless boiled for three (3) minutes or heated during the cooking process to no less than 160°F for twenty (20) minutes.
6. **FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES** may be used if processed outside the W.S.E. affected area and are washed in an approved manner. Pre-packaged, ready-to-eat salad foods may also be used. In-place spray units and units which periodically spray water on products to maintain freshness must be shut down, and these units may not be used until the emergency has been resolved. Remember to clean and sanitize before use.
7. **SINGLE SERVICE EATING AND DRINKING UTENSILS** may be substituted for reusable dishes and utensils.

8. **FOR HANDWASHING** use heated bottled water or safe water hauled from an approved supply or, use tap water followed by a hand sanitizer. The handwash water shall be dispensed from a container with a spigot.
9. **COOKING UTENSIL AND EQUIPMENT WASHING:** In three (3) compartment sinks – washing, rinsing and sanitizing procedures shall be followed with a chlorine sanitizing solution of 50 to 100 ppm (not to exceed 200 ppm) or other approved chemical sanitizer to be used and mixed in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines. Sanitizing solution shall be used in the third (3<sup>RD</sup>) compartment of the three (3) compartment sink. Automatic dishwashers, sanitizing with chemicals or hot water, can continue to be used provided the machine is operated in accordance with manufacture's instructions. **If water is visibly dirty or cloudy then use water from an approved source, either from bottled water or water that has been boiled.**
10. **FOOD CONTACT SURFACES** required to be cleaned in place shall, after cleaning, be sanitized with a solution of chemical sanitizer as described in No. 9 above, at twice the regular strength for immersion cleaning.
11. After the W.S.E. is officially lifted, any equipment (ice machines, beverage dispensers, etc.) that is connected to the establishment's municipal supply, shall be flushed, cleaned and sanitized and the municipal water supply allowed to run until clear with a chlorine residual. Any in line filters shall be replaced and the first batch of ice or other product containing water from the affected supply shall be discarded. Follow manufacturer's suggested sanitizing procedures in operator's manual.

**The health department, in consultation with the Food Safety Branch, may modify or alter the above W.S.E. guidelines as deemed necessary to protect the consumer's health.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT \_\_\_\_\_  
(CONTACT PERSON)